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ABSTRACT

The mission of the Student Training at Retail Stores (STARS) project was to develop and implement, with the collaboration of local business and the New York City Board of Education, a 3-semester program (January 1989 through June 1990) of intense occupational, vocational, and career education. Its purpose was to enhance job skills and secure retail sales jobs for high school juniors with moderate learning, speech, emotional, or intellectual disabilities. Project STARS was implemented at 7 school sites in Queens with 83 students and 7 coordinators. Written surveys collected information from 72 students and 6 coordinators in the fall semester and 73 students in the spring semester on Likert-type scales; coordinators were interviewed in the spring. Findings indicated that Project STARS satisfactorily implemented three program areas: curriculum development, classroom instruction, and workshops. Fall semester students liked the prospect of employment, social support, and knowledge gained. Spring semester students were more pleased with interpersonal relations but less pleased about employment prospects. Fall students suggested more trips and hands-on experiences. Spring students wanted more involvement. More than 94 percent of students reported their level of knowledge and/or self-esteem was positively affected by instruction or workshops. More than 38 percent reported they acquired jobs. (YLB)

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PROJECT STARS

1989-90

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8/90

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Project STARS
1989-90

SUMMARY

The Student Training at Retail Stores (STARS) project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Division of High School's Special Education Operations Unit. The program's mission was to develop and implement, with the collaboration of local business and the Board of Education, a three-semester program (January 1989 through June 1990) of intense occupational, vocational, and career education. The purpose of Project STARS was to enhance job skills and to secure retail sales jobs for high school juniors with moderate learning, speech, emotional, or intellectual disabilities.

This report is an evaluation of the September to December 1989 and January to June 1990 semesters. The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) also evaluated the 1988-89 program. During these semesters Project STARS served 83 students at seven high schools. Findings indicate that Project STARS satisfactorily implemented three program areas: curriculum development, classroom instruction, and workshops. The curriculum was judged positively by coordinators, and nearly 60 percent of the students rated at least one of the classroom or workshop activities and/or topics as "excellent" in quality.

Fall semester students liked the prospect of employment, the social support, and the knowledge gained. Spring semester students were more pleased with the interpersonal relations but less pleased about their prospects for securing employment. This may be due to disappointment in not being able to get or keep a job during the semester.

Fall students suggested more trips and hands-on experiences. Spring students wanted more involvement, especially through real job interviews and workshops. Coordinators also suggested more student involvement. In the spring, they suggested expanding the program beyond retail employment, organizing students' and coordinators' schedules to enable the active reinforcement of good work habits through work site follow up, and having more business involvement.

The outcomes are positive: more than 94 percent of the students reported that their level of knowledge and/or self-esteem was positively affected by instruction or workshops. More than 38 percent of the students report that they have acquired jobs, about one-third of them with the school's assistance. OREA found that students who secured jobs through school considered Project STARS to be more useful and their jobs more satisfying than those who secured jobs independently. This difference may be due to the ability of school personnel to arrange for higher-level jobs and to match jobs with students. Also, the added support of the program may positively affect the employer-employee relationship. This outcome supports the goal of Project STARS to combine academic instruction and practical work experience.

Based on these findings, OREA makes the following recommendations.

- Arrange for more activities requiring direct student involvement.
- Arrange for more involvement on the part of business, especially to provide jobs.
- Make time available for Project STARS teachers to follow up on students at job sites.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Student Training at Retail Stores (STARS) project was primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Education and was administered by the Division of High School's Special Education Operations Unit. The program's mission was to develop and implement a three-semester program (January 1989 through June 1990) of intensive occupational, vocational, and career education with the collaboration of local business and Board of Education (B.O.E). The purpose of Project STARS was to foster and enhance the employability skills of the target students and place them in entry-level retail sales jobs. The target population consisted of special education high school juniors with mild learning, speech, emotional, or intellectual disabilities who were enrolled in an occupational or vocational education program leading to a diploma. The STARS project was to be implemented at seven public high schools (six academic-comprehensive and one vocational-technical) located in the borough of Queens.

REPORT FORMAT

This report presents OREA's evaluation of Project STARS' 1989-90 program year. The report is organized as follows: the evaluation methodology is described in Chapter II, evaluation findings are presented in Chapter III, and OREA's conclusions and recommendations are discussed in Chapter IV.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

OREA evaluated the process and perceived quality of program implementation and evaluated five program outcomes over the fall and spring semesters of the 1989-90 school year. Based on the program objectives set by the Special Education Operations Unit, OREA generated corresponding evaluation objectives. When possible, implementation and outcome questions that were asked in the 1988-89 evaluation were asked again in 1989-90 for continuity. They are listed below.

Implementation Questions

- What were the criteria for selecting students to participate in STARS?
- What percentage of teachers had access to the project curriculum and how did they rate it?
- What were the activities and topics covered in Project STARS classes and workshops?
- What was the students' perception of program quality?
- What was the coordinators' perception of program quality?

Outcomes Questions

- Did the program activities increase the students' level of knowledge?
- Did the program activities increase the students' self-esteem?
- Did students in the program obtain satisfying jobs?
- Did students consider the program useful in finding and keeping a job?

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

SAMPLE

Project STARS was implemented at seven school sites in Queens. OREA planned to survey the full population of 83 students (about twelve students from each school) and seven coordinators participating in the program.

Instrumentation

OREA developed two survey instruments. The form for coordinators elicited information on classroom instruction and student workshops, curriculum utilization, staff development, student eligibility, the integration of Project STARS in each school, and perceived program quality. The student form elicited information on STARS classes and workshops, work experience, and perceived program quality. Both forms presented Likert scales of six ordinal categories and asked open-ended questions.

DATA COLLECTION

OREA gathered data on STARS in the fall semester and again in the spring semester in order to record any mid-year changes. To gather fall data, OREA provided the project director with survey forms for all students and coordinators in January of the program year. OREA received data on six of the seven coordinators (85.7 percent) and 72 of the 83 students (86.7 percent). The following May, OREA again provided the project director with survey forms for all students. OREA received data on 73 of the 83 students (88 percent). For the spring semester, OREA interviewed coordinators in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the program. The interviews took place in mid-May and data was received from all seven coordinators (100 percent). All data presented in this study are based on these responses.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to determine whether STARS had achieved its evaluation objectives for both program implementation and program outcomes, OREA conducted the following analyses. For program implementation questions, the responses to the relevant items on the coordinator surveys and interview schedules were coded, tallied, and the frequencies were calculated. To learn about students' perceptions of program quality, responses on the student data retrieval forms were used. OREA staff also observed program activities and had a series of informal interviews with the project director.

To determine the achievement of program outcomes, OREA analyzed student responses to the Likert scale items on pre- and posttests. Using these scales, changes in students' level of knowledge and self-esteem were measured. Students also indicated their level of job satisfaction on these scales. Consultants coded, aggregated, tallied and calculated the frequencies of student responses to generate information about these program outcomes. Variables indicated by the six point Likert scales were collapsed into an ordinal scale of three categories.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS

OREA's evaluation of Project STARS in 1989-90 addressed program implementation (student selection criteria, curriculum utilization, classroom instruction, workshops, and perceived program quality) and program outcomes (change in level of knowledge, self-esteem, and student employment).

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Program Staffing

The program was staffed by one project director and seven coordinators, one in each school. The project director was responsible for the overall administration of program activities, the supervision and completion of project activities, the training and coordination of coordinators, the development of a curriculum guide, and a videotape document of workshops. The project director worked closely with business representatives in creating a list of available jobs, and with OREA in the collection and preparation of the evaluation instruments and data.

The project director was based at the Queens High School District Superintendency. The position was filled by two people, each working on a part-time basis during fall 1989. One of these was the previous project director, who had been promoted to another position within the Board of Education. This sharing of the leadership between the previous and new directors provided a continuity in the program that was further enhanced by the fact that the second director was drafted from a STARS coordinator position. By the spring semester, the new project director was working alone in the position full-time.

Coordinators were responsible for teaching the occupational and/or vocational education curriculum, meeting with the project director to assist in creating a replicable and transferable curriculum guide, and assisting students in job placement and visiting students' work sites to assess the quality of students' work and job experience.

Program Activities

Project STARS included four major program activities: classroom instruction, workshop participation, curriculum development, and student employment. Classroom instruction consisted of an occupational education series that met five times a week for a total of 80 sessions each term. STARS students fulfilled the requirements of their regular academic program along with those of the project during regular school hours.

Project STARS staff, in cooperation with representatives from Alexander's Department Store, developed a series of workshops. The topics covered in the workshops presented in fall 1989 were loss prevention, customer service, selling techniques, and sales equipment. In Spring 1990, the topics covered were safety, retail merchandising, human relations, and quality control.

The Division of High Schools' Office of Special Education Operations produced a curriculum guide designed to enhance the workshop experience of the students. Coordinators were able to use the curriculum lessons best suited for the needs of their students, for example, as preparation for workshops, or follow up, or both. In addition, occupational education teacher-coordinators were free to incorporate their own areas of expertise into their daily activities. In this way the program was able to provide an integrated educational experience, because workshops were closely tied to class topics and activities.

The STARS design included a sequence of student employment activities distributed over the three semesters of the project's existence. In the spring and summer of 1989, during the students' junior year, the coordinators helped place students in summer jobs and part-time jobs after school or on weekends. The concluding sequence came this program year, when the seniors were placed in cooperative education work experience programs in which they attended school for one week and worked full-time during alternate weeks.

Student Selection Criteria

OREA asked teachers to identify the criteria used to establish student eligibility for participation in the program. The six coordinators who responded to this question indicated that eligibility in the fall was based on the students' behavior or reliability, as demonstrated by good attendance and social skills; the need for employment-related training due to particular learning disabilities or the need for motivation, attention, and training; and students' age or class. In the spring, the six respondents indicated that eligibility was based on students' age or grade, willingness to work, and behavior or reliability.

The mid-year shift of emphasis from student behavior and need of training to students' age or class and willingness to work may reflect the need for mature and motivated students with a certain academic skill level.

Curriculum Development and Utilization

In addition to the four curricula developed last year (attendance and punctuality, proper dress and makeup, communication skills, and interviewing) project staff developed eight more in 1989-90. In the spring, the new curricula focused on loss prevention,

customer service, selling techniques, and sales equipment. In the fall, the focus was on safety, retail merchandising, human relations, and quality control. All eight curricula have been compiled in a curriculum guide for Project STARS entitled Success in Retailing.

Five out of six of the fall coordinators reported that the STARS curriculum had been made available to them. Two respondents described it as "very appropriate," three considered it "appropriate," and only one found it "somewhat inappropriate" for the student population they taught. Three out of five respondents described the curriculum as "very relevant" for the goals of the program and two respondents found it "relevant."

In the spring, five out of seven respondents reported that they had received the curriculum and four out of six described it as "very appropriate." One respondent considered it "appropriate" and another reported it to be only "somewhat appropriate" for the student population they taught. All six respondents reported that the curriculum was relevant for the goals of the program. These findings indicate that coordinators found the curriculum increasingly appropriate for their student population and relevant for the goals of the program.

If coordinators did not receive STARS curriculum they were asked what they did to compensate for the lack of materials. In the fall, one respondent said that occupational education books were used to supplement classes, and another commented that the curriculum provided did not last a full year. The three spring respondents indicated that they created their own course and curriculum, elaborated on the fall curriculum, followed up on workshops, ordered new books, and looked at "real life" problems. This suggests that teachers felt free to contribute to and adapt project curriculum.

Classroom Instruction

Project STARS classes were held daily and totaled approximately 80 sessions per semester. From the start of the 1989-90 school year, students' schedules were planned to accommodate STARS classes, thus providing an integrated and streamlined academic employment experience.

OREA asked coordinators to identify the topics covered in the fall classroom sessions. They were, in descending order of frequency, customer service, communication skills, and loss prevention. The accompanying activities reported by the six respondents were role playing, discussion and counseling, and decision-making.

In the spring, the seven coordinators identified the following as topics covered in the classroom: how to gain and maintain employment, on-the-job skills, and interpersonal and work relations. Activities associated with these topics were reported to be, in descending order of frequency, role playing, decision-making, and group discussion or peer evaluation.

Six respondents from the fall reported that the classroom activities were specifically designed to help students develop special skills, such as communications skills in speech, writing and body language, interviewing skills including appropriate dress, and skills in how to gain and maintain employment. The skills targeted in the spring were communication skills, appropriate behavioral and attitudinal skills with an emphasis on improved self-esteem and self-confidence, and skills for finding and keeping employment. These findings indicate that classroom instruction complements the areas covered in the curriculum.

Workshops

Project STARS organized four workshops per semester. As described by the director, each workshop was hosted by the director, and featured a guest speaker representing one area of retailing. The purpose of the sessions was "to give the student an in-depth look at the real world of retailing." The sessions were videotaped and made available to site coordinators for use in conjunction with classroom activities.

The project director listed the fall workshop topics as loss prevention, customer service, selling techniques, and sales. The six coordinators reported that the related workshop activities were lectures by guest speakers, hands-on activities with sales equipment, mock interviews, a tour of an Alexander's Department Store, and videotaping workshops. The spring workshop topics were safety, retail merchandising, human relations, and quality control. The activities provided by the workshop presenters were: hands-on experience with a cash register, role playing, grooming, (including hair cuts and clothes shopping) hand outs on safety, group problem-solving, a store tour, and lectures. These findings indicate a matching of workshop and curriculum topics.

An example of the program's creativity and integration of academics and employment was the workshop on proper hair grooming conducted by the staff members of Se Salon Hairdressers. The students were given businesslike hairstyles and instructed in their daily care and maintenance. Another example of creativity, said the project director, was the workshop conducted by A&S Department Store. Students were treated to a breakfast and a conference in the A&S board room which they attended with A&S managers and assistant managers. Each student was then assisted by two representatives of the store in the selection and fitting of one appropriate interview outfit. Funds for this clothing were provided in the original grant for Project STARS.

Participants' Perception of Program Quality

Students' Perceptions. Of the 72 students who responded to OREA's fall survey, nearly 60 percent rated one or more of the topics and activities as "excellent" in quality (see Table 1). Less than five percent of respondents rated any activity or topic as "poor" in quality. Similarly, of the 72 students who responded to OREA's spring survey, nearly 60 percent rated one or more of the topics and activities as "excellent" in quality (see Table 2). Furthermore, indicating an improvement over the previous semester, only three percent rated any activity or topic as "poor" in quality. This finding suggests that the topics and activities selected by program personnel for both semesters were very much on target as far as student participants were concerned.

OREA asked students to identify what they liked most about Project STARS. Fall responses, in descending order of frequency, are that they liked the prospect of getting a job, the interpersonal relationships, the workshops, and the knowledge gained. The spring students gave the following breakdown of what they liked most about Project STARS, the interpersonal relationships, the knowledge gained, and the concrete rewards such as wages.

Students appear to be more pleased with their interpersonal relations but less pleased about their prospects of getting a job. This may be due to their disappointment in not being able to get or keep a job during the semester. Also, the student survey was distributed near the end of the school year, before students received the clothing provided by A&S. The timing of the clothing distribution, coupled with the lack of jobs, limited the enjoyment of concrete rewards such as wages and improved appearance, and may account for the relatively low positive response rate.

Table 1

Quality of Activities as Reported
by Fall Students

(In Percents)

STUDENT RATINGS	CLASSROOM		WORKSHOP	
	Topics[a]	Activities[b]	Topics	Activities
Excellent	73.6	74.6	59.7	65.3
Average	23.6	22.5	37.5	30.5
Poor	2.8	2.8	2.8	4.2
Total[c]	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0
(N)	(72)	(71)	(72)	(72)

Source: OREA-developed Student Survey, Fall 1989

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How would you grade the things talked about in your Project Stars classes?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How would you grade the things the class did during your Project Stars classes?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *Nearly 60 percent of the students rated at least one of the activities and/or topics as "excellent" in quality.*
- *Less than five percent of the students rated any activities or topics as "poor" in quality.*

Table 2

Quality of Activities as Reported
by Spring Students

(In Percents)

STUDENT RATINGS	CLASSROOM Topics[a]	CLASSROOM Activities[b]	WORKSHOP Topics	WORKSHOP Activities
Excellent	70.9	83.3	69.1	59.2
Average	26.4	13.9	28.2	39.5
Poor	2.8	2.8	2.8	1.4
Total[c]	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1
(N)	(72)	(72)	(71)	(71)

Source: OREA-developed Student Survey, Spring 1990

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How would you grade the things talked about in your Project Stars classes?" The same question was with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How would you grade the things the class did during your Project Stars classes?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *Nearly 60 percent of the students rated at least one of the activities and/or topics as "excellent" in quality.*
- *Less than three percent of the students rated any activities or topics as "poor" in quality.*

OREA asked students to identify what they disliked about Project STARS. The fall and spring response patterns to this question were identical. The most common dislike was not getting a job, followed by the workshops, and taking so many trips. Next, OREA asked students how Project STARS could be improved. Again, the spring response pattern replicated the fall findings. The most common suggestion was to have more demonstrations or actual interviews, followed by the suggestions of more topics and trips or workshops. These findings indicate that students would like to be more actively involved in the program, be it through employment, workshops, or classroom settings.

Coordinators' Perceptions. OREA asked coordinators how appropriate the workshop activities were for their students. Of the six fall coordinators none found the workshop activities "inappropriate," five found them "appropriate," and one described them as "very appropriate." Of the seven coordinators in the spring, six described the workshop activities as "very appropriate" and the remaining respondent found them "appropriate." This finding suggests that the coordinators' perceptions of the appropriateness of project workshops has increased during the year.

Next, coordinator respondents were asked how appropriate the workshop topics were for their students. Five of the six coordinators in the fall found the topics "appropriate" and one described them as "very appropriate." Illustrating a dramatic increase in the perception of the appropriateness of workshop topics is the fact that five of the seven coordinators in the spring described the workshops as "very appropriate" for their students and two found them "appropriate."

The responses given by coordinators when asked about the overall quality of the workshop presentations illustrate the improvement in workshop quality from the fall to the

spring semester. Whereas in the fall only one respondent in seven found the workshop presentations "excellent," five of the seven spring respondents described them as "excellent," and only two described them as "average."

Coordinators identified several positive aspects of the project: the connection it provided for students to the world of work, the interpersonal relationships, and the skills taught. Similarly, coordinators in the spring identified: the support the program provided students, the connection it provided students to the work world, and the practical and interpersonal skills it provided.

Coordinators made the following recommendations. In the fall, they suggested more direct student involvement, more variety in the types of jobs covered, and more equipment. In the spring, coordinators again suggested that the program be oriented towards more types of jobs. They also suggested a stronger emphasis on work, noting that this could be accomplished by coordinating schedules or providing more time for coordinators to follow-up on students at job sites. Coordinators also suggested that more business involvement is needed for positive work experiences. Lastly, they suggested a focus on the more needy students. These findings suggest that coordinators, like students, continue to support direct student involvement, especially in the form of positive work experiences.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

OREA analyzed five outcome objectives: whether program activities significantly increased the students' level of knowledge and self-esteem, whether students were employed, and if so, whether they found the program useful and their jobs satisfying.

Level of Knowledge and Self-Esteem

To determine whether program activities increased students' level of knowledge and self-esteem, OREA asked students if they had learned anything new in their Project STARS classes or workshops and how each of these activities made them feel about themselves. More than 94 percent of the students responding in the fall reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem had been positively affected by at least one of the program activities (see Table 3). Furthermore, 65 percent of the fall respondents reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem were "very positively" affected by at least one of the program activities.

Spring responses also indicated that more than 94 percent of students reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem had been positively affected by at least one of the program activities (see Table 4). Furthermore, indicating an improvement over the previous semester, more than 69 percent of the spring students reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem were "very positively" affected by at least one of the program activities.

A cross-semester comparison of these figures shows that participation in Project STARS did increase student's level of knowledge in both the classroom setting and workshops, 4.1 and 2.7 percentage points, respectively. Students also reported that participation in workshops helped increase their self-esteem (by 1.4 percentage points), although classroom instruction failed to do so (a decrease of 4.1 percentage points). These results suggest that Project STARS achieved its evaluation objective of increasing students' knowledge and self-esteem either through instruction or workshops or both.

Table 3

Effects of Activities on
Level of Knowledge and Self-Esteem as Reported
by Fall Students

(In Percents)

Level of Knowledge or Self-Esteem	ACTIVITIES			
	Classroom Instruction		Workshops	
	Knowledge[a]	Self-Esteem[b]	Knowledge	Self-Esteem
High	65.3	76.3	73.6	78.9
Medium	29.2	22.2	22.3	16.9
Low	5.5	1.4	4.2	4.2
Total[c]	100.1	99.9	100.1	100.0
(N)	(72)	(72)	(72)	(71)

Source: OREA-developed student survey, Fall 1989

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "Did you learn anything new in your Project Stars classes?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How did your Project Stars classes make you feel about yourself?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *More than 94 percent of fall respondents reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem had been positively affected by at least one of the program activities.*
- *More than 65 percent of respondents reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem were very positively affected by at least one of the program activities.*

Table 4

Effects of Activities on
Level of Knowledge and Self-Esteem as Reported
by Spring Students

(In Percents)

Level of Knowledge or Self-Esteem	ACTIVITIES			
	Instruction		Workshops	
	Knowledge[a]	Self-Esteem[b]	Knowledge	Self-Esteem
High	69.5	76.1	71.8	80.3
Medium	29.1	18.3	26.8	16.9
Low	1.4	5.6	1.4	2.8
Total[c]	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(72)	(71)	(71)	(71)

Source: OREA-developed student survey, Spring 1990

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "Did you learn anything new in your Project Stars classes?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How did your Project Stars classes make you feel about yourself?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *More than 94 percent of the spring students reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem had been positively affected by at least one of the program activities.*
- *More than 69 percent of the spring students reported that their level of knowledge and/or their self-esteem were very positively affected by at least one of the program activities.*

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Before determining the usefulness of Project STARS in locating satisfying jobs for the students, OREA first looked at what percentage of students were employed. In the fall, 42 out of 74 respondents (56.8 percent) reported that they had jobs. This figure dropped to 53.4 percent in the spring. This decline suggests that while many students can become employed they are unable to maintain their positions. These findings suggest that the program has met its evaluation objective of promoting student employment, but has met it for only a little over half the students. Furthermore, the drop in employment, at a time when it could reasonably be expected to rise, suggests a lack of continued support by staff personnel or a lack of students' interest in retail jobs.

Job Satisfaction and Program Usefulness

Tables 5 and 6 present data on program usefulness and job satisfaction. To determine whether STARS had achieved its objectives in promoting job satisfaction, OREA compared the responses of students who had acquired jobs independently and those who had done so through their school. OREA found that 40.5 percent of the fall students who acquired jobs did so independently. OREA also found that 96.4 percent of the students who acquired jobs through their school and 88.3 percent of the students who found their jobs independently found Project STARS to be "moderately" or "highly" useful. In addition, 69.2 percent of students who found their jobs through their school and 66.7 percent of students who found their jobs independently reported that they were highly satisfied with their jobs. Thus, students who found their jobs through their school perceived the program to be more useful and their jobs more satisfying than those who found their jobs independently. Generally speaking, these findings represent an increase

Table 5

Job Satisfaction and Program Usefulness
as Reported
by Students with Jobs in the Fall

(In Percents)

Level of Job Satisfaction and Program Usefulness	HOW STUDENTS FOUND JOBS					
	Independently		Through School		Totals	
	Job Satis-faction[a]	Program Use-fulness[b]	Job Satis-faction	Program Use-fulness	Job Satis-faction	Program Use-fulness
High	66.7	76.5	69.2	75.0	68.3	75.6
Moderate	33.3	11.8	26.9	21.4	29.3	17.8
Low	0.0	11.8	3.8	3.6	2.4	6.7
Total[c]	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.1
(N)	(15)	(17)	(26)	(28)	(41)	(45)

Source: OREA-developed student survey, Fall 1989

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How satisfied (happy) were you with the job?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How useful was Project Stars for finding and keeping your job?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *Out of 74 students for whom data was available, a total of 42 acquired jobs.*
- *Nearly 60 percent of the students who acquired jobs did so through their school.*
- *More than 96 percent of the students who acquired jobs through their school and more than 88 percent who found their jobs independently found the program moderately or highly useful.*
- *More than 69 percent of students who found their jobs through their school and nearly 67 percent of students who found their jobs independently reported that they were highly satisfied with their jobs.*

Table 6

Job Satisfaction and Program Usefulness
as Reported
by Students with Jobs in the Spring

(In Percents)

Level of Job Satisfaction and Program Usefulness	STUDENTS WHO FOUND JOBS					
	Independently		Through School		Totals	
	Job Satis-faction[a]	Program Use-fulness[b]	Job Satis-faction	Program Use-fulness	Job Satis-faction	Program Use-fulness
High	52.9	52.9	85.2	82.1	72.7	71.1
Moderate	41.2	17.6	14.8	14.3	25.0	15.6
Low	5.9	29.4	0.0	3.6	2.3	13.3
Total[c]	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(17)	(17)	(27)	(28)	(44)	(45)

Source: OREA-developed student survey, Spring 1990

[a]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How satisfied (happy) were you with the job?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[b]These findings are in response to the survey question, "How useful was Project Stars for finding and keeping your job?" The same question was asked with reference to the workshops.

[c]Totals vary because of missing data on individual items.

- *Out of 73 students for whom data was available, a total of 39 acquired jobs.*
- *Nearly 54 percent of the students who acquired jobs did so through their school.*
- *More than 96 percent of the students who acquired jobs through their school and nearly 71 percent who found their jobs independently found the program moderately or highly useful.*
- *More than 85 percent of students who found their jobs through their school and nearly 53 percent who found their jobs independently reported that they were highly satisfied with their jobs.*

in the perceived usefulness of the program and job satisfaction over 1988-89.

In the spring, 53.4 percent of the students (39 out of 73) for whom data were available reported that they had acquired jobs. OREA found that 46.2 percent of the students who acquired jobs did so independently. OREA also found that 96.4 percent of the students who acquired a job through their school and 70.5 percent of students who found their job independently found Project STARS "moderately" or "highly useful." Also, more than 85 percent of students who found their job through their school and nearly 53 percent of students who found their job independently reported that they were highly satisfied with their jobs. Thus, students who found their job through their school perceived the program to be more useful and their job more satisfying than those who found their job independently, replicating the fall findings.

To determine whether the program achieved its objective of being considered useful in securing satisfying jobs for the students, OREA looked at several aspects of achievement. When not controlling for the way in which the job was found, OREA found that a cross-semester comparison shows only a negligible increase of .1 percent in job satisfaction and a 6.7 percent increase in program usefulness.

When OREA compared the responses of students in both semesters who considered the program highly useful in securing a satisfying job, there is a striking difference. Students who found their job independently showed a 23.6 and 13.8 percentage point drop, respectively, in considering the program highly useful and their job satisfying, compared to a 16 and 7.1 percentage point rise in the same category for those who found their job through the school.

These findings suggest that the program did achieve the evaluation objectives of providing a useful means of securing a satisfying job for students for whom the program

provided jobs. The program was not as successful in achieving this objective for students who found their job independently. The explanation may be that school personnel were more capable of securing higher-level jobs or jobs that were better matched to the individual students. Also, the added support offered by the program may have positively affected the employer-employee relationship. These findings support the project's decision to combine its instructional role with that of assisting students to find employment.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The High School Special Education Operations Unit of New York City Board of Education implemented Project STARS during the spring of 1989. During the program year of 1989-1990 it served approximately 83 high school special education students at seven sites in the borough of Queens. The program was staffed by one project director and seven coordinators, one in each school.

The program satisfactorily implemented three program areas: classroom instruction, workshop participation, and curriculum development. The curriculum was rated positively by coordinators and nearly 60 percent or the students rated at least one of the classroom or workshop activities and/or topics as 'excellent' in quality. Also, overcoming a difficulty encountered in 1988-89, the STARS program accommodated students' schedules in planning classes, offering an integrated and streamlined academic employment experience.

OREA's findings showed that students were very positive about many aspects of Project STARS. In particular, students were encouraged by the prospect of finding and retaining a job. They also enjoyed psychological benefits from the program such as it increased their self-confidence and self-esteem. Students also noted the importance of the knowledge that they gained. OREA found that project coordinators were in full agreement with student participants in that they perceived similar positive aspects of Project STARS, particularly the connection it provided students to the work world, through practical and interpersonal skills, and the support and encouragement it provided for increasing students' sense of self-worth.

Student responses indicate that the program could be improved by more student

involvement in the form of jobs, demonstrations, actual interviews, trips, or workshops. Coordinators also suggested more direct student involvement as well as a greater emphasis on work. The latter could be accomplished by providing more time for coordinators to follow up on students at job sites, and by involving businesses to a greater extent. These findings indicate that both students and coordinators want more active involvement on the part of students, especially in the form of satisfying employment.

With regard to program outcomes, OREA found that more than 94 percent of students in the spring reported that their level of knowledge and their self-esteem had been positively affected by at least one of the program activities. With regard to actual employment, nearly 57 percent of the fall and nearly 54 percent of the spring students reported that they had acquired a job; two-thirds of the fall students and nearly two-thirds of the spring students had done so through their school. OREA found that both fall and spring students who acquired a job through their school considered Project STARS to be more useful than did students who found their job independently. Also, the students who found their job through their school had a higher level of job satisfaction than did those who did so independently. One explanation for these findings may be that school personnel were better able to arrange for higher-level jobs and were more able to match appropriate jobs with individual students, or that the added support of the program positively affected the employer-employee relationship. This outcome supports the project's decision to combine its instructional role with that of assisting students to find employment.

OREA found that STARS did meet its objective of increasing students' level of knowledge both through class instruction and workshops presentations. STARS was also successful in meeting its objective of increasing students' self-esteem, but only through

the workshops and not through instruction.

Project STARS approximated but did not meet its goal of promoting student employment. While more than half the students were employed in both semesters, students had difficulty keeping their job, as illustrated by the drop in the employment rate in the spring. OREA found that Project STARS met its objective of providing a useful means for students to secure a satisfying job, but only for part of the population. Students who found a job independently indicated a drop in program usefulness and job satisfaction. This finding was offset by the responses of students who found a job through their school; they demonstrated an increase in both the perceived usefulness of the program and job satisfaction.

Based on the above discussion, OREA makes the following recommendations.

- Arrange for more activities requiring direct student involvement.
- Arrange for more involvement on the part of business, especially to provide for more jobs.
- Make time available for Project STARS teachers to follow up on students at job sites.